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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KISL](#) [KPAO](#) [AE](#)
SUBJECT: APPROACHING GOVERNMENTS OF MUSLIM COUNTRIES TO
QUELL VIOLENT REACTIONS TO OFFENSIVE CARTOONS

REF: STATE 20587

Classified By: HILARY OLSIN-WINDECKER, CHARGE D'AFFAIRES,
A.I., REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

¶1. (C) Ambassador delivered reftel demarche to MFA Director for International Organizations Yacub al-Hosani February 12. Ambassador left the points as a non-paper. Al-Hosani will brief the MFA under secretary and the new Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed.

¶2. (U) In the wake of the cartoon controversy, UAE political officials and religious personalities continue to be outspoken in their call for understanding and forgiveness. On February 8, Ekmal al-Deen Ihsanoglu, Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) met with new Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid. According to English daily "Gulf News," Sheikh Mohammed stressed the importance of a civilized dialogue between Muslim leaders and Islamic authorities and their counterparts in other religions. He said "all sides must consider the sensibilities of other parties, especially with regard to religious beliefs, without which Muslims will lose their distinct identity." He also urged the OIC to fight prejudice against Islam by organizing international discussion forums and conferences to define Islam and explain its principles. Ihsanoglu thanked the UAE for encouraging dialogue between various cultures on the basis of respect, trust, and brotherhood.

¶3. (U) During the Friday, February 10, unified sermon drafted and distributed by the government's Islamic Affairs authority, preachers objected to blasphemous cartoons, but said it would be wiser if Muslims could forgive to avoid a conflict between cultures. "While others should respect our religion and refrain from any such acts, we -- as Muslims -- should take the course of forgiveness," preachers said. English daily "Khaleej Times" reported that Sheikh Mahir al-Sofi, who preaches at the Sheikh Khalifa Mosque in Abu Dhabi and is a senior preacher at the new Islamic Affairs authority, told worshippers that for the sake of tolerance and the respect shown by many in the west, Muslims should forgive this time. (Note: The Ministry of Justice, Islamic Affairs, and Endowments, was split up in the recent Cabinet reshuffle. The UAE leadership wanted to separate Islamic Affairs to guarantee there would be enough resources to ensure that the schools and mosques would teach and preach moderate Islam. End note.)

¶4. (U) An expected protest against the cartoons did not materialize on February 10. The U.S. Mission and other diplomatic missions had alerted their employees and families to avoid crowds. A week earlier, there were reports that between 500 and 3,000 people had protested peacefully on the city's cornice to voice their anger at the drawings.
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